

# OpenTheo

## How Can God Be Omniscient about Never-Ending Future Events?

June 20, 2022



### #STRask - Stand to Reason

Questions about how God can be omniscient about never-ending future events, whether the salvation of a man who comes to Christ after being dramatically changed by a brain injury “counts,” and whether one should feel at peace dating another believer who differs on whether or not one can lose one’s salvation.

- \* Since our time in Heaven will be endless, how can God be omniscient, knowing everything that will happen, when there isn’t a finite amount of knowledge to be known?
- \* If a cruel, abusive man becomes kind and gentle and comes to Christ after a traumatic brain injury, which is the real version of him, and does his salvation “count”?
- \* Should I feel at peace dating another believer who differs with me on whether or not one can lose one’s salvation?

### Transcript

I'm Amy Hall, I'm here with Greg Kolkel and you're listening to Stanther Reasons #SDRaskpodcast. Hello, Greg! Hey, Amy. All right, here's a question from Andrew and I think this is a very interesting question.

How can... Yeah, all the rest are so boring. How can God be omniscient since in heaven we will have everlasting life and an endless amount of time to do things? It seems to me that there must be a finite amount of knowledge for God to know everything. What am I missing? Well, that's actually a good question because it raises the issue of actual infinities.

And William, like Craig, has raised a challenge against the universe being infinite in time, having always existed, based on the idea that you cannot accomplish, you can't have an actual infinite because it creates logical incongruities. Now, frankly, I've never been impressed by the Hilbert Hotel arguments. And partly, and I remember the Passantinos

had mentioned that this treats infinity like a number and it's not a number, it's a quality.

And I don't know how Bill would respond to that, but I just never was taken with that. So maybe it is possible for there to be an actual infinite in the mind of God, though when you think about it, given I think the question has to do with how we have everlasting existence and the new facts that are obtaining and if God is omniscient, he is knowledgeable of those facts in the future that have not yet obtained. And since the future is potentially infinite, then God's knowledge of all of that should include a set of infinite number of facts that he knows in his omniscience about the future.

Now one end around might be, so my first response is, oh, I may be. And so there can be a set of infinite facts that God knows. I don't think that's a problem because I don't think that I don't agree with the alleged logical inconsistencies with actual infinite.

I think another way to accomplish what Bill is concerned with is to demonstrate you cannot accomplish an actual infinite through successive addition. Now I know that sounds hoity-toity, but it's really simple. That means you can't count to infinity.

Let's try it. One, two, three, four, 100, 100, 200, three. Well you can see that no matter where you go, how many you add, you're always going to have a finite number.

You will never accomplish an actual infinite. So even though we will live forever, we will never live for an infinity because we will always have an age. All right.

Now that has interest. If you follow that, then this also secures for us at the beginning of the universe because if you can, the universe is a series of events. And so if you can't accomplish an actual infinite by a series of events, one being added to the other, then the universe can't be infinitely old.

Okay. So that, I think, is adequate to solve that problem. But I think it also solves the problem that Andrew has raised because if we never, if we never live forever, I'm sorry, if we never live in infinity, but we live forever and we always have an age that at any point in the future, there is always going to be a finite number of facts for God to be known, to be known by God through his omniscience.

So infinity is a infinite amount of time is a, you know, a certain sense, an abstract potential, but will never be an actuality. Except that what's past is finite at any moment. But if God's going to know the future and the future doesn't end, does he know all things that will happen forever and ever and ever and ever and ever without end? Yes.

That is infinite. That is not a finite number. No, it would have to, but you can't accomplish an absolute.

You can't accomplish an infinite number through successive edition. So it wouldn't even apply to God. And this is kind of a conundrum because I see your point and I'm not sure

exactly what to make of that.

But as I pointed out earlier, even if it does amount to an actual infinite that God knows, I don't think that's a problem. William Lane Craigwood, but I don't think it is. Now, I guarantee that he's confronted this issue before and talked about it.

I don't know what his solution is, but from where I sit, I don't think it's a problem either way. I'm not sure he would have a problem with it. I could be wrong about that.

I think all the problems he's talked about are always finite regarding the past and the fact that there has not been an infinite number of events up until now. Yeah, that's well, that would be my approach, but I know Bill's argument has been the impossibility of an actual infinite. And that's how he disqualifies an actual infinite in the past.

But maybe this is a special case. I don't know. But of course, as you said, there will never be an actual infinite number of events.

Right. Except that in the future there is. No, there isn't.

If you can't. I mean, in the future, in the future, if it doesn't end, if you're right, right, but it's not theoretically for actually if we're actually going to live infinitely, never end forever, not infinitely forever forever. Okay.

Right. So if that's going to happen, that means there's no limit to the things that there's no stopping point to the things that will happen. So at any point in the past, there will be a finite.

But if God knows what's going to happen in the future, that's what makes this difficult to I think the answer is simply God knows everything regardless of how many there are. And I don't think I don't think that is a problem or contradicts any of the arguments that William L. Craig makes about the past. If that makes sense.

Well, certainly not about the past, but like he says, he employs this broader principle, no actual infinities. And then he he takes that, he makes the point, then he applies it to the past. It can't be actually infinite past.

But it seems to me if there's no actual infinities, there can't be actual infinite in the future, either according to his reasoning. But I don't know. Well, well, well, yeah, that's the thing.

There'll never be actual the moment will not have happened. There's always an action. There's always not there will never be an actual infinite moments that have happened.

But if things are going to happen in the future and not end, that is that is an infinite number of events, even if they have not actually happened yet. I'm getting I'm getting a migraine. I don't know what I'm talking about.

I I'm just throwing some ideas out there. Oh, it's entirely fair. I know these are good ideas, but it appears that they're not solvable.

But if your understanding is an actual infinite is not a problem in itself, then God knows the future, which arguably, as you pointed out, contains an actual infinite number of events and they're so what? That's what omniscience means. Yeah, I think that's I think that's the way to resolve. But this is really interesting.

I'll probably be thinking about this a lot often on trying to figure out what I think about this. So thanks for that great question, Andrew. All right.

Here's a question from JS. I read a true story where a cruel, abusive man became kind and gentle after a traumatic brain injury, which is the real version of him and his soul. If the new version comes to Christ, but the original version never would have before the injury, does it still count? I'm a little bit mystified in a certain sense about the question because if a person comes to Christ under any circumstance, it counts.

If he would not have come to Christ under the other circumstance, then he would be a Christian. If under the new circumstance, he does come to Christ, then he would be a Christian. History is filled with examples of people who were one way nasty and became Christians and people who were not nasty and became Christians.

People who are nasty and got dramatically changed, people who are nasty and the change happened slowly afterwards as they were slowly sanctified. I don't understand why the circumstance that's just been described would raise questions about a person's salvation. And look at if you're an Armenian, if that's your view, then under the circumstances of being mean and nasty, if that fixed your will against God, then you still have a fixed will against God and you're responsible for that.

And if being really nice changed to become really nice, then you do trust Christ, although lots of nice people don't trust him. I don't think it's a matter of being nasty or nice. Then you're a Christian.

If you're in a reformed perspective, God can change any heart, a really nice heart that's a wicked sinner or a really wicked, bad, nasty person who's still a wicked sinner, God can change them. So I don't see how this issue relates ultimately to the question of salvation, regardless of what side of the kind of Armenian reformed fence that you happen to be on. And that makes sense to you.

Yeah, I would say there's kind of maybe an assumption behind this question that the state of your brain is responsible for you coming to God or not, as if we're kind of trapped by things that could be going wrong with our brain. But honestly, this is a spiritual issue. This is not a physical issue.

It's not even an issue of my ability. When God calls people, when he draws them, he

changes them. And it doesn't matter.

This is what you were saying, Greg. It doesn't matter what issues you have or what injuries you have. It's a spiritual, it depends on God's work in you.

Now, Greg, what would you say to this part of the question about which is the real version of him slash his soul? They're both real at different points of time. Again, this seems to me to be pretty straightforward. If a person, there's lots of people who are nasty, who become nice, let's just set aside the spiritual element.

Their souls are nasty, then their souls change and grow and become more virtuous. Now becoming more virtuous doesn't make them a Christian, obviously, because even being more virtuous, there's still all the sinful stuff that makes them culpable before God. But I think the presumption of the question is people reject Christ because they're nasty crabby people and they accept Christ because they're nice, sweet people.

Well, this is completely mistaken because, like I said earlier, lots of sweet people never become Christian. I mean, LDS, your Mormon friends, magnificent by human standards. And they are following a distortion of the truth, a false gospel, and never become Christians, even though they're really nice people.

Then you got all kinds of nasty, nasty folk that in virtue of being that nasty are deeply aware of their nastiness and are responsive. Just like the tax collector in Jesus' parable sitting in the back of the synagogue beating his breast, saying, "God, have mercy on me a sinner." So I think that the idea that nice people become Christians and not nice people don't is mistaken. And therefore, if they're not nice because of a brain problem, it's unrelated to them becoming, not becoming a Christian.

The implication is they're forced not to be a Christian because they're forced to be nasty because their brain circumstances are such that that's the way they are. None of this applies really to the actual circumstances of people becoming Christian, whether you're Armenian or whether you're reformed. Let's go into a question from Katie.

I'm mostly Calvinist in my theology. I'm a single 30-year-old woman living in a rural area, not a lot of dating prospects. Is it unwise for me to date someone who believes you can lose or reject your salvation? He seems to love and serve the Lord in value's biblical authority.

Am I placing extra biblical rules on myself by feeling like I need to only date someone who aligns perfectly with my theology? Should I feel at peace dating another believer who differs with me in things like this? Well, I don't think it's so much an extra biblical rule. I think it's a matter of wisdom. And so it's smart, not, I mean, it's, I'll be back up and put it this way, it's not smart.

And what I mean there is not that it's sinful. I'm saying it's not smart to marry someone

in which anything in your life that you hold really dear is something that that person does not share as well. And I mean, this is classic dating kind of stuff.

And I'm thinking Neil Clark Warren, who I think has done the best work on decision making in wisdom and finding a mate that really you do well together. I think it's called finding the love of your life is the name of his book. But basically his point is make sure that in all the majors, you guys are like minded.

This includes theology. Now she says she's mostly reformed. I'm not sure exactly what that means.

So terriologically, all the things that relate to so to salvation, like for example, the five responses to the remonstrance that have come to be known as the tulip representing reform theology. I don't know how you could be mostly that. It's all or none.

It's all a kind of a package. Now I'm reformed my so teriology, but not I'm not confessional. So I don't believe in a covenant theology.

I don't believe in the way that's construed on the reform side. And I don't believe in infant baptism, whatever. So maybe that's what she means.

I don't know. But I do think that this potentially and I think you might be better situated to answer this, Amy. But if she is a committed, if she's committed to reform theology, at least with regards to salvation.

And someone is really committed to our minion theology. And a lot of people that I know who are committed and I know lots of them who are committed our minions like Bill Craig, for example, or JP Warren. There is an ideological hostility towards reform folk, not to the people, but to their ideas.

And that, it seems to me, is not a healthy environment in a marriage where you have some foundational issue that you have very strong differences on. It's not a sin. It's not a non-biblical requirement.

It's an issue of what's smart. Now every relationship can survive certain differences. I mean, it's like cash in the bank, cash out of the bank in the savings account.

You start making big withdrawals like that. If you want to go that direction, you better make sure every single other important thing is lined up because relationships can, it's very hard for relationships to endure multiple big differences between people who have committed themselves to live their lives together. Well, just looking at this question, Katie, when you asked, should I feel at peace dating another believer who differs with me and things like this? It sounds to me like you aren't feeling peaceful about this.

And if that's the case, I'm guessing that means that there's already some sort of conflict

or some sort of, I can't think of the word. Yes, discomfort. Yes, there's discomfort over this issue already because otherwise you would be fine with it.

If the two of you were discussing this and you got along perfectly and it didn't cause any issues, you wouldn't be feeling unpeaceful about that. So my advice would be if something is giving you pause, I would pay attention to that. Because that, I mean, that's never going to be perfect.

You obviously have to choose your battles and find out what's important to you. But it's just something to be aware of and pay attention to and see what happens. Because it is a difficulty.

You're living in a rural area. You don't have a lot of prospects. That is something to take into consideration.

But I guess I would just go ahead carefully. Yeah, and this is just, this is where you just have to weigh the issues and what you're facing. But even if you're in a difficult situation, a rural situation with not a lot of prospects, you don't want to make a foolish decision.

A Marion Hast, Repent in Leisure. Now, I mentioned Neil Clark Warren and some people aren't going to like what I'm going to say right now. He has a service that is world famous for connecting Christians together.

Okay. And it's called, I can't remember. You know, this is the dating thing online.

What is it? E-Harmony. E-Harmony. Okay.

Now, I'm just saying I know lots of people. In fact, I met a couple a week and a half ago in Georgia at her final reality for whom E-Harmony was what God used to bring this couple together. And this allows you to kind of specify a number of things like theology.

And by the way, this couple that I talked to said that standard reason was an important factor because he mentioned in his profile that he was a stand committed standard reason guy and she was doing, so he thought, "Oh, great. He's my kind of guy, at least in this area." So now, some people are uncomfortable with dating programs or whatever. Okay, got it.

Then don't do it. But I'm not in principle uncomfortable with it. And I do know that this, I know probably five different couples that are happily married in satisfying relationships who met through E-Harmony.

And sometimes they were geographically widely separated geographically when they started out. So anyway, just a recommendation. I think if you are committed to a theological view, if you're total charismatic, why do you want to marry a non-charismatic?

You're driving each other nuts.

So this is an issue of wisdom and in fact, what Amy recommended was something I recommend in our decision-making tape. Discussions, talk, CD, thing. There's no tapes anymore.

And that is that if you don't feel a piece about it, that doesn't mean it's a sign from God that it's wrong. It means you're aware of something that may be amiss and you need to take that seriously. So I'm with Amy on this one.

And this isn't a small issue because this will determine what church you will go to. This is a very foundational issue. And if you are going to go to church as a family, this is a major issue.

Especially as you said, Greg, if it's hard to find a church that isn't hostile towards the other view. So yeah, this is a difficult one. And my heart goes out to you, Katie.

I hope E-Harmony helps you out. I also know many people who have gotten married through E-Harmony. All right.

Well, thank you, Andrew, JS, and Katie. We love hearing from you. If you would like to give us a question, you can send it on Twitter with the #STRask or you can go to our website, just go to podcasts, choose #STRask.

And then there's a link right there to submit a question. And we will get that question and we will consider it for the show. We'd love to hear from you.

This is Amy Hall and Greg Cogle for Stand to Reason.

[MUSIC]